

1971 WAR CRIMES 'Razakar leader' held in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A war crimes suspect, believed to be the deputy commander of Bagerhat Razakar Bahini, has been arrested in connection with crimes committed against humanity during the Liberation War, 1971. Police said they arrested Sirajul Islam alias Siraj Master at Dema union in Bagerhat around 11:00pm yesterday. He was allegedly a close aide to AKM Yusuf, Jamaat leader and founder of notorious auxiliary force Razakar Bahini in 1971. Syed Sayedul Haque Sumon, a prosecutor, told The Daily Star that the International Crimes Tribunal-1 issued the arrest warrants against three war crimes suspects, including Siraj, on June 10. Police already had arrested the other two.

Pro-Kremlin media accuse West of assigning blame over jet

AFP, Moscow

A chorus of Kremlin-friendly media declared yesterday that the truth about what happened to the Malaysian jet would likely never be found out, accusing the West of heaping the blame on Russia. "Western press already knows who is to blame for the loss of the airliner -- Russia obviously," said popular tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda.

Gaza paramedics 'brothers' bonded by horrors of war

AFP, Gaza City

At a dingy Gaza ambulance station, paramedics struggle to stay awake during 24-hour shifts that see them coming under fire and dealing with the deaths of civilians and even colleagues. The men describe themselves as a family, bonded together by experiences that are difficult to comprehend. They have collected body parts and dead children; they have been trapped between Israeli shelling and Hamas sniper fire; and several of them have been wounded. Shift supervisor Jihad Selim has been a paramedic for 17 years and has no regrets, despite having worked through three wars and the violence of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising (2000-2005). But he wouldn't want to see his children follow in his footsteps. "The things we see are very hard," he told AFP. "We go into a house and we find a body torn into pieces, someone picks up a hand and gives it to you and says 'take it'." "But these are things we're used to." Adel al-Azbut, 30, is similarly stoical about the horrors they encounter on a daily basis. "To be honest, I just get on with it," he says. "If I see pieces of a body, my professional responsibility requires that I just

deal with situations like that and do it in a professional way." Adding to the pressure is that fact that they all have families at home, and many admit that their deepest fear is getting an emergency call from their own home. Azbut decided he wanted to be a paramedic during the second intifada, impressed by the work done by first responders treating people in the Gaza Strip. "The best thing for any human being to be able to do is to help another human being," he says. "I'm honoured that I'm someone who is able to help people." In the background, the phone rings constantly. Often it is nothing more than children, bored at home, who ring the emergency service's toll-free number for fun. "The worst thing that ever happened to us was them making our number toll-free. Now in Gaza, if you want to make sure the sound on your phone is working, you call our number," Selim says ruefully. But often it is far more serious. Families living in flashpoint border areas sometimes make desperate calls in the hope of being evacuated by ambulance, but Selim can't send anyone without first coordinating with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Nur Hossain

FROM PAGE 16 completion of his previous 14-day judicial custody. This was the first time that he moved the court for bail since his arrest by an anti-terrorism squad of Kolkata police on June 14. Indian police nabbed Hossain on the charge of entering the country without valid documents. Police said Hossain and his two accomplices -- Zahidul Zaman and Salim -- were arrested at an Indraprastha flat building in Koikhal, some two kilometres away from Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Airport. Nur Hossain stands accused in the gruesome abduction and killing of seven people, including Narayanganj city panel mayor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar. The seven were abducted on April 27 in the city and six bodies were spotted floating in the Shitalakkhya river on April 30. The seventh surfaced the next day. Hossain, councillor of ward-4 and a close aide to Narayanganj-4 Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman, fled the country after the abductions, sources said. Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam claimed that Hossain and some others had bribed some Rab-11 officials Tk 6 crore to help Nazrul killed. Following the allegations, three officials of Rab-11 -- Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, Maj Arif Hossain and Lt Commander MM Rana -- were fired. Later, they were arrested by law enforcers. All of them have given depositions in court admitting their links with the incidents.

Khaleda, Tarique

FROM PAGE 16 It could not be known if they had reached any decision. Following an emotional reunion at Dubai International Airport after over three years, Khaleda, Tarique and his wife and daughter went to Madina on Sunday morning to perform Umrah as royal guests. Khaleda's entourage is scheduled to leave for Jeddah today. Later, they will go to Makkah by road and perform Umrah there. The BNP chairperson is expected to return home on July 26.

A 'doctor'

FROM PAGE 16 Tk 5 lakh in 2012. His luck ran out yesterday when a mobile court backed up by Rab personnel busted him and sentenced him to two years in prison and fined him Tk 1 lakh. Quoting Kayum, Executive Magistrate AHM Anwar Pasha, who led yesterday's drive, said he enrolled in Premier University of Technology in 2007 but never attended any classes or sat for any exams. Kayum had claimed that he completed his internship at the Premier University Hospital but could not say where the hospital was. Pasha said Kayum used to memorise doctors' prescriptions and names of several medicines before using them for his prescriptions. Physician Swapan Kumar Tapader, an official of the Directorate of Health Services present during the drive, said Kayum was risking patients' lives issuing wrong prescriptions and giving wrong treatments. "He could not even answer basic questions of medical science," Swapan said. The court yesterday caught Kayum when he was examining a patient at his chamber. The court also fined the pharmacy owner Tk 1 lakh.

Open up

FROM PAGE 3 Government statistics show that there are 111 dead bodies and out of them 53 were unidentified initially, Faizur Rahman, additional secretary (labour), told The Daily Star over the phone. "Later 43 dead bodies were identified through DNA tests. Among the remaining ten, eight were identified recently," he said, adding that families of the eight might be compensated after Eid. Reading out the demands, Ruhul Hannan, husband of missing Ahenoor, said a list containing names of the eight victims were sent to Prime Minister's Office in May. "We were told that they would be compensated within a week, but that week has not come even though two months have passed," he said.

Rana Plaza

FROM PAGE 3 sitting, and so it is difficult for me to get jobs," he said, adding that his four-member family is dependent on him. Speakers alleged that the government and BGMEA authorities had received foreign aid for the victims of Rana Plaza, but instead of distributing the money among the victims, they had grabbed it for themselves. Garment Workers' Trade Union Centre, Garment Workers' Front and Rana Plaza Garment Workers' Union jointly organised the programme. Emdadul Islam, president of Rana Plaza Garment Workers' Union, said, "So far we have been demonstrating peacefully, and we request that the government does not force us to take to the streets." The building collapsed on April 24 last year leaving 1,132 people dead and scores other injured.

Test testing kit

FROM PAGE 1 reports to the court in four weeks. Yesterday's court order did not ask the government to stop the use of Z-300 in detecting toxic chemicals in food. It asked the government why its use of Z-300 to detect formalin in fruits and vegetables should not be declared illegal. The order came in response to a writ petition filed by Fruit Importers' Association. "Use of formalin in food is a heinous crime. It must be stopped. But, if thousands of tonnes of fruits are destroyed on the basis of tests with inappropriate machines, it will be damaging to the traders, farmers and consumers," said Manzill Murshid, counsel of the petitioners. "Checking accuracy of the kit, therefore, is very crucial," he said. Mobile courts have been using Z-300 over the last two years to detect formalin in fish, fruits and vegetables after the Department of Fisheries imported the gear from the USA in early 2012. In mid-June this year, joint teams of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and BSTI started checking all consignments of fruits, mainly mangoes and litchis at eight entry points of the capital and destroyed tonnes of fruits, fined traders and sent some of them to jail. The teams also conducted drives across the country, upsetting traders, growers and some experts who said the Z-300 was not meant for detecting formalin in food and that they were incurring huge losses because of the mobile court drives. On June 17, The Daily Star ran a

report titled "Kit itself unfit", where food scientists said the kit was meant to measure chemicals or gases in the air of labs or hospitals, not in food. Monirul Islam, director (nutrition) at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, who assessed the tool as part of a study in food adulteration, said the Z-300 picks up on other chemicals like aldehyde, ketone or hydroxyl groups and does not distinguish them from formalin. He said aldehyde and ketones were widespread in nature and some amount of natural formaldehyde existed in fish, fruits and vegetables. He said the machine was not appropriate for measuring formalin in food. Petitioner's lawyer Manzill claimed that the machine showed presence of formalin in all fruits when it was used, and the law enforcers' anti-formalin drive created an adverse impact on the economy. The US maker of the Z-300 -- Environmental Sensors Co -- in an email informed the petitioners that the kit was used for examining the purity of air, he told The Daily Star. The secretaries of the ministries of health, food and home; chairman of BCSIR, director of NFSL, inspector general of police, director generals of Rapid Action Battalion and the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection; DMP commissioner and the managing director of the instrument importing company -- Tracer Electrocom Bangladesh -- have been made respondents to the rule and order issued yesterday.

Dismantle Rab

FROM PAGE 1 utterly failed," said HRW Asia Director Brad Adams in a press release yesterday. "The lack of accountability has allowed the Rapid Action Battalion to run amok. Rab is beyond reform and should swiftly be abolished," it added. The rights body made the call for the second time within a little over two months. On May 14, it urged that Rab be disbanded and called on Sheikh Hasina to establish an independent body to investigate the allegations of crimes allegedly committed by Rab. After the formation of Rab in 2004 during the BNP-led four-party government, HRW first raised question over the activities of Rab in December 2006. In May, 2009, it recommended dissolving Rab and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), terming them "symbols of abuse and impunity." In May 2011, HRW urged Bangladesh government to reform Rab within the next six months or disband it altogether. The elite force came under serious criticism from different quarters after three of its officers were sent on retirement for their alleged involvement with the abduction and murder of seven people in Narayanganj in April. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, whose government had formed the force, also called for disbanding Rab, but Sheikh Hasina on May 31 said it was not possible. The HRW yesterday said evidence that Rab officers were responsible for the contract killings of seven men in April allegedly on behalf of a ruling party member, has provoked outrage

in Bangladesh and is yet another example of how the unit has operated as a death squad. Over the last decade, successive governments led by the BNP, the subsequent military-backed caretaker regime, and since 2009, the Awami League, have allowed the force to operate with impunity, leading to serious and systematic abuses, read the release. The Rab, claimed the HRW, has been responsible for numerous acts of torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests, and approximately 800 killings over the last 10 years. GOVT, NHRC REACTIONS The government will take no steps regarding Rapid Action Battalion based on the observation of foreign rights bodies, Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu said yesterday. Asked whether the government would dissolve Rab, he said, "It is our internal affair. Nothing will be done based on their [HRW] letter." He was talking to reporters after attending a cabinet committee meeting on law and order at the home ministry in the capital. Meanwhile, NHRC Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said the demand of HRW "appears to be politically motivated." "Recently Rab has become controversial because of some of its members' complicity in serious human rights violations. Their accountability is very much in question now," he mentioned. The HRW, he added, cannot conclude that Rab is beyond reform. "On what basis have they drawn such a conclusion?" questioned Mizanur. He called for a thorough reform in the force to deal with the issue.

80pc repair work done

FROM PAGE 16 people will have to suffer immensely while travelling outside Dhaka to spend Eid holidays with their near and dear ones. Talking to reporters at Mawa intersection in Gazipur, the minister said those who would fail to complete the task by the deadline would be punished after Eid. He also expressed satisfaction over the progress of repair works at different spots of Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) continued selling advance tickets for the second day yesterday. Ticket counters at Kamalapur

Railway Station opened at 9:00am. Like the previous day, hundreds of people were seen waiting in queues for hours. Some had been waiting since Sunday midnight. Advance train tickets are being sold only from the station where a person can buy a maximum of four tickets. Train tickets for July 24 and 25 were distributed on Sunday and yesterday, while tickets for July 26, 27 and 28 will be distributed today, tomorrow and on Thursday. Dhaka railway police, meanwhile, held 17 people for their alleged involvement in selling tickets on the black market. Police were interrogating them, said Abdul Mojib, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police

Station. Law enforcers also held a ticket scalper with 25 train tickets of different rail routes in Reazuddin Bazar area of Chittagong. BRTC distributes advance tickets from its different depots across the country, including seven in Dhaka city. It will begin additional bus services for Eid from Dhaka to different districts today. As many as 450 BRTC buses will be operated daily during the Eid rush. Meanwhile, ferry operators of Mawa-Kawrakandi route have demanded that heavy salvage vessels be kept ready for the route during the Eid rush as ferries are facing troubles due to tidal waves and strong current.

Child war heroes rule govt jobs!

FROM PAGE 1 of these people." Those who lost the certificates include Sheikh Alaaddin, deputy secretary (now an OSD), Solaiman Chowdhury, additional general manager of Chittagong railway, Golam Rob Mollah, former manager of Jamuna Oil, and ATM Abdul Hye, executive officer of Sonali Bank. The move comes amid widespread allegations that a large number of government officials fraudulently obtained freedom fighters' certificates over the past few years to extend their service period by one year. In November 2012, the government extended the retirement age of freedom fighters from 59 years to 60. Earlier in April 2010, their retirement age was extended by two years from 57. Following the 2012 extension, the number of freedom fighters in government services stood at around 11,000. Of them, those in the final years of their service now were at best 15 or 16 years old during the Liberation War. To identify fake freedom fighters in the civil bureaucracy, the government's first consideration was the age of the officials at the time of the Liberation War in 1971. The minister said the government would not consider anyone as a freedom fighter if he was below 13 at the time of the war, as that would be "unrealistic". Over the past five years, some 11,150 people from different professions got freedom fighters' certificates, sources said.

At present, there are some 2.12 lakh freedom fighters. The number was 1.98 lakh in the 2002 gazette published during the period of BNP-Jamaat rule. The Anti-Corruption Commission is currently investigating the allegation that some other top government officials obtained fake freedom fighters' certificates at the fag end of their service life during the tenure of the Awami League government. They include Khandakar Shawkat Hossain, expatriates welfare and overseas employment secretary, Niaz Uddin Mia, health secretary, KH Masud Siddiqui, Liberation War Affairs secretary, AKM Amir Hossain, Public Service Commission secretary, Molla Waheeduzzaman, privatisation commission chairman, and Md Abul Kashem Talukder, former joint secretary of Liberation War Affairs (now an OSD). "After identifying the fake freedom fighters we will also find out those who helped them obtain the certificates. I have already taken the initiative and I will finish it," the minister told The Daily Star. Contacted, former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder said providing false documents is a criminal offence. "The public servants who provided forged documents and are still in their jobs will face both departmental and legal action. But those who have already retired will face legal action only, as departmental action is not applicable to them," he added. Asked about the departmental

action, he said the officials might even lose their jobs. The other officials who lost the certificates are Shafiqur Rahman of Railway ministry, Abdul Wares and Shafiqul Haque of home ministry, ANM Bazul Rashid of land ministry, ATM Shajahan, Rawson Alam, Abu Hossain Miah, Mojibur Rahman, AKM Habibullah and Ranjit Kumar Roy of primary and mass education ministry, Danesh Miah of education ministry, Abbas Ali Khan of agriculture ministry, Sheikh Mahabubul Alam (currently in LPR) of National Board of Revenue, AKM Jalal and Hasem Ali of LGRD ministry, Joynal Abedin and KA Nizahar Uddin of disaster management ministry, Delowar Hossain and Nurunabbi Patwari of Tax Zone-2, Abul Hossain and Mohammad Ali of upazila education office of Asasuni in Satkhira, Harun-or-Rashid Khan of Dhaka DC office and Shahajad Azim of Munshiganj DC office. Also on the list are Solaiman Biswas, MA Majid, Nur Islam, Belal Hossain and Abdul Malek. Their identities could not be immediately known. Earlier, the ministry cancelled the certificates of some 116 fake freedom fighters. Under the rules, freedom fighters, their children and grandchildren enjoy 30 percent quota in government jobs. In addition, freedom fighters' children and grandchildren get special quotas in public schools, colleges and universities.

Ukrainian military

FROM PAGE 16 10,000metres [and are] regularly equipped with air-to-air missiles R-60 that can capture and destroy targets of a distance up to 12km and up to 5km as guaranteed." Russian officials say they have evidence of the jet's presence following images taken by the Rostov monitoring centre, and has urged the US to release satellite images taken at the time of the crash. "According to the statement by the US representative, they have some pictures from space that confirm that the missiles were launched by the rebels. By nobody has seen these shots," Kartopolov added. He said that a US satellite was present over Ukraine territory at the time of the crash and would like it to release

these images to the "world community for further investigation." The audience was shown graphics and video that purport to be three civilian aircrafts flying at the same time at MH17, including a Copenhagen to Singapore flight. "Ukrainian officials reported that on the day of the Boeing 777 crash there were no military aircraft available in the region, so as you can see, this doesn't appear to be true." He said that Ukraine had self-propelled, anti-aircraft BUK missile launchers 8km north-western from Lugansk, close to the territory controlled by the rebels, and denied that the Russian military had supplied pro-Moscow rebels with any weapons, according to journalists tweeting from the meeting. Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl

Bildt has tweeted: "There are those who remember press conference where Soviet Ministry of Defence denied everything concerning shooting down of KAL007." Koren Airlines KAL007 was a passenger plane shot down by a Soviet fighter jet in September 1983, after the Seoul-bound New York flight flew into USSR airspace during heightened US-Soviet tensions. Russia's latest attempts at distancing itself from the downing of flight MH17, refuting allegations that it is somehow culpable, could inflame relations with Western leaders. David Cameron had said that if President Putin failed to adjust his stance "radically," there could be sweeping sanctions imposed on Russia and its business operations abroad.